

4 Dec 1973
(Wives Version)

THE MILITARY PROFESSION

Good evening ladies. / Both you and your husbands are reaching the end / of the History and Policy course. / This ^{week} marks ^a shift from historical case studies / toward more contemporary matters / and thence into the Defense Economics and Decision making course. / ~~Thankful see so much after Thucydides.~~

Like to talk first about why we have used history / as the teaching vehicle for ^{you} your husbands /

Really - Amherst - Navy - frustration /

Bismark, as you may recall, said, / "Fools say they learn from experience. / I prefer to profit from other people's experience." / This is a practical approach to the use of historical experience. / It doesn't go quite far enough for us. / Much military knowledge ——— cannot be learned / from experience in advance of actual conflict. / We simply must draw on the experience of others / many others. Studying history is one good way to do that. /

At the same time, let's not forget / that we can draw parallels and analogies / between the past and the present / only with peril. / History never repeats itself exactly, / because the ~~same~~ influencing conditions / can never be exactly the same. / If only the time has changed, / the context in which people act has been altered, / ergo the result will be different. /

But some knowledge of history ought to be able to prevent some mistakes. Why were some decisions disastrous while others enormously successful? I look on strategy as a jig-saw puzzle that we are piecing together. But the pieces are not all in front of us. Many are hidden. In strategy you always ^{are} have to look for the missing pieces.

The very process of dissecting and looking for significant pieces in the events of yesterday gives us insights into the forces influencing the world around us today. It develops the patience and inquisitive skepticism necessary to probe deeply in search of the truth. We hope that it is habit forming. We hope that your husbands will take from this course the desire to search for the truth; the wisdom that the truth is often not what it seems to be; and the recognition that perseverance and objectivity are the essential attributes in fathoming difficult problems.

Hopefully, ~~they~~ ^{well} and you appreciate that strategic issues are far from black and white, right or wrong. And that the quest to understand the grays can be an exciting, worthwhile, intellectual challenge.

Is this ^{thought} the only rationale for studying history: ^{here} An intellectual challenge to adventure in the wonderland of the liberal arts. No. Strategic concepts, including their historical derivation, are as much a part of your husband's

professional world ^{are} as submarines, tanks, or missiles. It's part of the intellectual side of his career. From now on ^{this part} it will become more and more important to him as a decision-maker. Strategy is the framework within which decisions must be made. His grasp of the intellectual principles that he has been studying and his ability to translate them into logical, workable, premises will directly influence the kind of officer he is, ^{the} the kind of decisions that he makes.

I should add that I am extremely pleased at the way your husbands have tackled this first trimester's work. The professors are excited by their enthusiasm and willingness to accept each new challenge.

History also ties to the idea that there is a military profession.

Huntington: Historical perspective is part of the expertise which distinguishes a profession from a craft or skill. A plumber or carpenter does not need to know how and why his craft developed. He needs only to know the latest and best skills. Professional men must be aware of the tradition of which they are a part because it influences how they make decisions. It provides us with moral/ethical guides for actions.

1. ~~In an economic sense this means understanding to what extent the state can and will support certain alternatives.~~
2. ~~In a tactical sense this means understanding the constraints placed on tactical alternatives by tradition, by the national self-image, and by our military's sense of our reputation.~~

There are 2 characteristics or aspects of the military profession which I want to stress -

One is Ethics; and the other Ability to adapt to change.

Ethics was a good topic last year with My Lai and Lavelle as fresh examples.

It is even more cogent this year - added Cambodian bombing, Watergate and Agnew.

Everyone, politicians, bureaucrats, military men, is paying more attention to ethical issues today. Is this attention tending to paint ethical issues as black and white? Are they? Are ethics absolute? Are my ethics the same as your husband's? Are our professional ethics the same? Should they be? Can they be? Let's glance at 2 examples:

First, the falsification of the Cambodian bombing records. Was this a case of outright fraud and therefore all bad? Should we consider that the reason for this falsification might have been to maintain a degree of military secrecy that has been accepted as normal in past wars?

Second, General Layelle was certainly wrong to authorize the raids that he did but, did he do this on the basis of what he considered was the more moral alternative? Under the circumstances - an alternative that might have saved American lives?

In one of your husband's assigned readings, The General, which I commend to you highly there were no starkly moral, black and white issues. The General simply went from combat action to combat action failing to reassess his assumptions. He goes from failure to failure with greater and greater losses of personnel. Is this man venal? Stupid? Self-serving? Indifferent to human suffering? No. Forrester doesn't portray him that way. He makes him a basically bright, attractive, sincere and well-intentioned person. If the General failed to look for the truth, so too, did thousands of others in the military, civilian leadership, the press and the public of his time. The advice the General gave was telling people what they wanted to hear rather than committing occupational suicide as a renegade. He didn't see any moral or ethical issues to be surmounted. Or if he did was he perhaps saving himself until he would be in a position to be able to affect significant change? Or is there danger in what may happen to the values which any of us hold as we move along the way to such a position of responsibility? At what point do we decide something has to be said or done and to break with the system?

This raises an important issue: / At what point do we make our disagreement / with policy or operations known? / Must we not avoid becoming committed in a small way / such that we may later be unable to extract ourselves? / But if we move precipitately to dissent / - perhaps before all of the facts are clear / - do we not run the danger of being a martyr for no cause at all? /

Poignant - Halberstam / NSC Meeting Summary '68

"Then Johnson had McNamara, just back from Vietnam, / summarize the situation, growing Communist strength, / steady government deterioration. / Then Johnson took over. He had five choices. / One was to blast the North off the map with bombers. / Another was simply to pack up and go home. / The third choice was to stay the way we were, / perhaps lose more territory and suffer more casualties. / The fourth was to go to the Congress for great sums of money, / to call up the reserves and go on a wartime footing. / The fifth choice was to expand the war without going on a wartime footing, / to give the commanders what they needed. / He had, he said, decided that this was the correct one, / the centrist, moderate one: / only Lyndon Johnson could go to war / and be centrist and moderate. / Then he turned to them and asked if anyone there had objections. / He asked the principals one by one. / The key moment was when he came to General Wheeler / and stood looking directly at him for a moment. / "Do you, General Wheeler, agree?" / Wheeler nodded his agreement. / It was, said someone who was present, / an

extraordinary moment, like watching a lion tamer dealing with some of the great lions. Everyone in the room knew Wheeler objected, that the Chiefs wanted more, that they wanted a wartime footing and a call-up of the reserves; the thing they feared most was a partial war and a partial commitment. But Wheeler was boxed in; he had the choice of opposing and displeasing his Commander in Chief and being over-ruled anyway, or going along. He went along. It was the beginning of what was to be a very difficult war for him, of being caught again and again between his civilian authorities and the other Chiefs (whose views he shared but was always able to contain himself). It was for him an endless series of frustrations, and only his brilliant political negotiations kept the Chiefs together and prevented several resignations at different points. He came out of it an exhausted and depleted man; his health ruined by major heart attacks, and the questions which he had faced at that July meeting still unanswered." *End quote*

The break with authority or the system is especially difficult in the military profession because other military employers are slim. The French Foreign Legion is no more, and Russia, unlike her treatment of John Paul Jones, hasn't shown interest in our military iconoclasts recently.

It is not, though, just a matter of personal sacrifice of one's career that is involved. What are the military

man's obligations to his service? / To his comrades? / To his country? / Can these conflict with his personal sense of integrity? / I would suggest that this issue / is particularly vexing / to a military man / because he must deal in two realms of morality / the private and the public. / We all commonly condone actions by our State / that would contravene our private sense of morality. / War itself is one example. / Purposeful deceit and spying are others. /

Let's be more specific. Let me go back to the case of General Lavelle. / Lavelle said he believed that he was acting in the spirit of his orders / by preventing a Communist troop / material buildup. / Why then did he falsify records? / There was no reason to be devious / if he thought he was carrying out his orders. / Yet did he not really violate his trust / by ordering 28 unauthorized raids / and three falsified after-action reports? /

Why did he do this? / Was it for personal gain or glory? / It doesn't appear that way to me. / And, curiously, I have never seen a newspaper man suggest that. / Nor have I ever seen one / who even asked the question. / Why did this man do what it is averred that he did? / The newspapermen immediately assumed / that because General Lavelle contravened our sense of private morality, / he was deserving of condemnation. / Perhaps in General Lavelle's view, / he acted because his sense

of public morality justified what he did. Perhaps he felt that the nation's interests were endangered by prolonging the war, and wasting lives, because of the way in which he was forced to fight.

Can we not in some sense sympathize with a man who at least appeared to be trying to serve his nation's security? And even perhaps, because he accepted the responsibility and the risk of disavowal and dishonor in order to achieve what seemed to him to be important to the country? But, too, are not loyalty and obedience the highest military virtues? Do we not, as professionals, abhor precedents that break down the fundamental precept of subordination in our military way of life! And at this particular moment in our country's history, wasn't General Lavelle running counter to what the citizens of this country would support as being in the interests of national security? Did he then, not hurt the image and reputation of our entire military profession, and in so doing, vitally damage our ability to defend the nation's security interests? And ironically, did he not bring down upon us greater control of our military operations in war, the very thing that may have motivated him to break with authority?

Now let's look at the other and more recent case of military falsification - the Cambodian bombing fiasco. A

good case can be made for the secrecy/surrounding the over 3000 sorties made over Cambodia in 1969 and 70./ But why was it necessary to lie about it?/ Here is what Tony Lewis,/ who was at our Military-Media Conference/ said about it:

fact "The bombing was done without announcement/ and without the approval of Congress./ And now it emerges that even the classified military records were falsified./ A former Air Force Officer testified/ that he and others had made detailed false reports/ of raids in South Vietnam / raids that were not made /- and had burned the real records of attacks in Cambodia./ A supposedly complete bombing record/ supplied to the Senate Armed Services Committee by the Pentagon/ only last month still omitted these Cambodia raids./ General Brown, in a letter to the committee/ did not dispute the testimony. / He just said in effect, / that the lies did not matter because those who ordered and planned the raids/ would not have been deceived. / General Brown added that the false reports/ had not violated the Uniform Code of Military Justice. / That requires proof of "intent to deceive,"/ he said, and there was none here./

Is it the official policy of the Secretary of Defense/ that one legitimate security device/ shall be calculated falsifying of the military reporting system?/

If so, it is quite clear that what the cadets in American military academies/ and the officers and men in the services are going to understand/ as the basis of their careers: / Truth

and your oath to the Constitution/are outdated notions;/you owe no respect to the American public/for its legislative representatives;/you may lie in the performance of your duties/without fear of retribution or conscience/by relying on the "legal" excuse/that your superiors knew you were lying." / *And quote*

Now I am not saying that Tony Lewis/has an unbiased outlook on this./I am pointing out that we subject ourselves/to unmerciful criticism and harm to our profession/when we get into this kind of a position./

And how we get into some of these/raises another issue you should think about./ That is the case of the over zealous sergeant or lieutenant/such as the ones who reported on the Cambodian and Lavelle cases. *is such* If there is a lack of accountability up and down the line,*that* do we need a sergeant to blow the whistle? /Is this a chain of command failure?/ How would you feel if a subordinate of your husbands/pulled a tattle tale? /After all, he's expected to know right from wrong,/ and as a matter of fact, has the obligation under the UCMJ/ of refusing to carry out illegal orders. / Would you excoriate him for lack of loyalty to the organization?/ What if he is immature and overzealously wrong/but does grievous harm in the meantime./ Does this not say something/about the sense of confidence in the chain of command and the system, which must be engendered if we are to survive?

Now I suppose that the key question that you and I should ask ourselves in thinking of the Lavelle and Cambodian cases is, "Did the people involved think these implications through before they took the actions they did?" Would you? Would I? Does one carefully consider the possible conflicts of public and private morality before one acts?

Can we lay down rules of conduct for situations like these, or other situations in which the military person may well find himself when loyalty, the prospects of promotion, public acclaim, and other factors, impinge on what his private conscience would tell him is right, moral or legal?

Obviously, there is no easy answer. In my personal view there is no rigid formula. What you want to think about, however, is the nature of the conflicts of conscience and purpose that are likely to confront a military man. Only by understanding that they exist, by seeing how others have handled them, and by dissecting the causative elements, can you understand how an individual might act in a similar situation.

Be sure too, that you appreciate that I am not talking of issues that are confined only to four-star officers. These conflicts of public and private morality are with each

officer from the day that he accepts a commission. You simply cannot live in an atmosphere where the glorious purpose of the organization permits some violations of private morality without it affecting your standards.

But there are obligations that must be kept in mind if the military officer is to be a professional. Huntington says that the professional is a practicing expert, someone who works in a social context, who performs a service. The professional's client is always society. Society cannot function without him. This means that the professional must express a sense of social responsibility. If he does not, and if the services on which he has a monopoly are indeed essential to the society, that society is endangered.

Clearly, the basic sense of social responsibility in our profession is strong today. My Lai, Lavelle, the Cambodian cover up were individual failures to meet age-old standards of our profession. I am proud that no one has talked about "Post My Lai" morality - as some have of post-Watergate. We have the basic integrity to recognize and discredit an aberration. |||

Even so, there are some who believe that the unique elements of a military profession are bound to promote excesses of all sorts.

Or have we simply been the victim of type-casting? There are many ways, of course, in which we are type-cast. We--you and I should look at these roles, I believe, and try to see whether we think they are true, and if so, why? For instance, does the frequent necessity to subordinate individualism to obedience inevitably separate the military officer from the liberal thinkers of the world? Or is it because our concern as a profession is with the use of military power and a liberal's concern is more with economics, that we appear to be separated? Is that separation necessary and inevitable?

If we are isolated from our society, is it because of peculiar requirements of our profession or our own indifference? Will the society help or aggravate this isolation as we move into an all-volunteer force?

Perhaps the type-casting that really bothers me most is the belief that we stubbornly resist change. One theory is that we are a small society unto ourselves; that any society has an instinct for self-preservation; and that preservation to most people means "Don't change anything. Keep the status quo."

There are some choice stories in a delightful little book by Elting Morison which your husbands read that unfortunately seem to bear out this thesis. One of these involved a marvelous example of resistance to change. Morison's story

of the USS WAMPANOAG, a ship which, incidentally, was named for an Indian tribe right from here in Southern New England. She was commissioned in 1868. She was steam propelled and could travel, at twenty knots. That was five knots faster than any other vessel afloat at that time. That is 33% speed advantage. She could run circles around anybody. Today we're paying millions of dollars for far lesser speed advantages. We didn't build another ship like WAMPANOAG for twenty years; and just one year after we commissioned her, we laid her up and eventually sold her.

Why did we do that? Well, Professor Morison suggests that it was because the Navy had no concept of why we needed such a ship. The Navy had no mission for a ship with her capabilities. The reasons given at the time for eliminating her were in fact, specious. But perhaps the Naval Society was in fact, reacting with logic. For after all, if they didn't have the foresight to see where the WAMPANOAG fitted in, they were wasting resources to procure her.

Here now we see the transition that's coming between the Strategy Curriculum and the forthcoming Defense Economics Course. The Navy rejected WAMPANOAG because it did not have a clearly defined mission for the ship. Not until Mahan did the Navy gain an understanding of its objective, and go on to build ships of that type.

We'll work in the Defense Economics Curriculum to address the necessity for defining the purpose the objectives of military forces--particularly of course, of Naval forces--before we can decide whether we should be building WAMPANOAGS, carriers, submarines, or what-have-you? These past ten seminar weeks have dealt with the broad, ethereal realms of strategy. We're now beginning the deflation process to the everyday world of decision making. Better decisions can be made if they are placed in a Strategic framework. You will also better understand the complexity of decisions your husband must make if you appreciate the moral conflicts that he may face, the societal pressures of the military environment, and the dubious patterns that many of his predecessors have traced. All of these considerations form the background to ^{our} his study in Defense Economics.

Hope you

I am convinced that we need a strong military force, not one full of militaristic anachronisms but one which is creative and responsive to the needs of our society. I am convinced that you husbands will be better qualified for this task by having attended the Naval War College. And, most important, the officers whose wives are in this audience will be best qualified because you ladies have cared enough about what they are doing to devote your precious time here.

Let me close with a quote from a letter from the Commanding Officer of a destroyer to a young man--fifteen--who

had been aboard his ship. / The boy was interested in Annapolis, and in the navy as a career. / The Commanding Officer described all the joys--"the fun and zest"--of being a naval officer. / Then he carefully tempered the advertising with facts on the hardships of such a career. / Here are the words: /

"On the other hand, if you aspire to a successful career as an unrestricted line officer, / you must thoroughly enjoy the practical business of going to sea. / So much so that you are willing to spend nearly half of your life / away from your home and family. / You must be willing to place your responsibility to your ship / above all other duties; / and you will find that she is a jealous mistress / with unending demands on your time, energies and attentions. / You must be able to both give and carry out orders / with which you may not wholeheartedly agree / and, especially in the context of today's social environment / be willing to accept the fact that your chosen profession / may not be held in high esteem by the community at large. / You must believe completely in the value and importance of your commitment. / If and when you marry, / it must be to a woman who has uncommon courage and understanding / and who would rather have a whole man part of the time / than part of a man all the time, / for she will be expected to cheerfully accept / even greater sacrifices than you. /

Ladies, thank you. /